

Aggies, Lady Aggies te Big 12ea

Photos by Tim Moog, Stew Milne and Ryan Rogers

Aggies discuss six-game skid after 6-1 start

By JAMIE BURCH
THE BATTALION

Based on the Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team's mid-season skid, Dear Ole' Saint Nick must have bypassed College Station this Christmas.

After exploding to a 6-1 start, the Aggies have dropped six straight, including their last three to Big 12 opponents — the University of Oklahoma, Baylor University, and the University of Nebraska. Here is what the Aggie hoopsters had to say about the setback.

What was the outlook of the team at 6-1 heading into the Clemson game?

"It was real positive. We always look forward to playing top 25 teams. We try to have a good game. We want to beat them in order to gain respect." — Freshman guard Jerald Brown

What can you judge about the team based on the Clemson game?

"In the first 10 minutes we came out in a scoring funk. We came out in the second half like we wanted to play, but we couldn't put the nail the coffin. We've played well against highly ranked teams. It's a confidence builder. It makes us physically tougher going

into conference play. Every night is tough, but it gives us a feel for the Big 12." — Freshman guard Jerald Brown

What has the team not been able to do over the last six games to get the win?

"Against Oklahoma, we didn't play. We might as well have mailed in the score. As a coaching staff, we have no answers. It's the only time I've looked at a tape of the game where the game tape was worse than the game." — Head Coach Tony Barone

"Our problems have been dry spells. We've run into scoring and shot selection droughts. We can't play a 40 minute major college basketball game and have scoring droughts for six, seven, and eight minutes. And that's been our biggest problem." — Head Coach Tony Barone

How tough were the close losses to Baylor and Nebraska?

"Execution is the key in close games. It's the way you win. That's the bottom line. There are always times in a game when players have the opportunity to step up. It might be a different guy every night. When it's 49-46 and the shot clock is winding down to five seconds, we need the guy that goes

and gets the basket for you." — Head Coach Tony Barone

Are there any concerns about being able to compete in the Big 12 after losses to OU, Baylor, and Nebraska?

"As far as I'm concerned, no one is God — except Kansas. Everyone is beatable, Kansas included. You just have to play perfect in order to beat them." — Sophomore forward Shanne Jones

"We don't look at the expectations of other teams. We don't look at sports critics' preseason polls or who they say will not do well because anyone can lose on any given night, just like Kansas State gave Kansas a run for their money." — Freshman guard Jerald Brown

How can the team turn the season around and start winning against the top teams in the country?

"We started preparing Monday for Texas. We're just going to get after it. We're going to leave it all on the court. It always helps to be at home. I feed off the crowd. It helps to play in your own backyard." — Freshman guard Jerald Brown

"We have to play 40 minutes. We have spurts where we can't do any wrong, followed by spurts

where we do everything wrong. We need more consistent play throughout the whole game." — Sophomore forward Shanne Jones

"The team is staying positive during the losing drought. It's easy to get negative, but we've all adjusted. There are no negative attitudes. Everyone's day will come." — Freshman guard Jerald Brown

The Aggies' Christmas Performance

December 23
vs. Clemson (L) 76-64

G. Rollie White

December 27
vs. Princeton (L) 46-38

El Paso

December 28
vs. Northern Iowa (L) 82-70

El Paso

January 5
vs. Oklahoma (L) 78-59

G. Rollie White

January 8
vs. Baylor (L) 69-66

Waco

January 11
vs. Nebraska (L) 74-72

Lincoln

Highly-touted freshman overcomes pressures of living up to expectations

By KRISTINA BUFFIN
THE BATTALION

There is a certain inexplicable pressure that surrounds college athletics. Oftentimes, highly-touted freshman athletes are expected to come in and live-up to their high school accomplishments.

However, freshman guard Jerald Brown, who was named 1996 Texas Mr. Basketball, has been able to avoid the pressure make a smooth transition to the Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team.

"It (the pressure) has affected me in little ways, but it is not an excuse for my play," Brown said. "I sometimes think about it at nights in my bed. I think about how I have to play well because people are expecting it."

Brown has played in all 13 games, starting 10. His best game came against Nebraska Saturday where he finished 8 for 10 from behind the three-point arc.

His three-point shooting this season ranks him first among Big 12 freshmen in three-point field goals per game.

Teammate Calvin Davis said it is not only Brown's three-point shot that has helped the Aggies, but his overall performance.

"He's doing a lot for the team right now," Davis said. "You know, he's 6'8", so he can post up most guards, and then he can also shoot the three."

Brown comes from a family with a background in athletics. His father, Jerald Brown Sr., played major league baseball with the San Francisco Giants in 1975.

Brown said he has always

played a variety of sports, but decided to focus on basketball in ninth grade, when he was hit pretty hard in football, and because he kept growing taller.

"I knew I wanted to play basketball," Brown said. "I had always loved the game and wanted to play in the NBA."

Brown's father died of leukemia when he was five, but he said his mother has always been supportive of him and has helped him overcome the pressures of being one of Texas' top basketball recruits.

"My mom said if I play my game, I'll do well and to have fun," Brown said. "Lately, I've been having fun and leaving all that I have on the court, there is really no more pressure."

Whatever his approach, it's working. Brown is shooting .384 from the floor, averaging 10 points and three rebounds a game.

A&M Head Coach Tony Barone said Brown has stepped up in each game this season.

"Jerald's progressing as we thought he would as far as making the transition to major college basketball," Barone said. "He's learning every game and he's only going to get better."

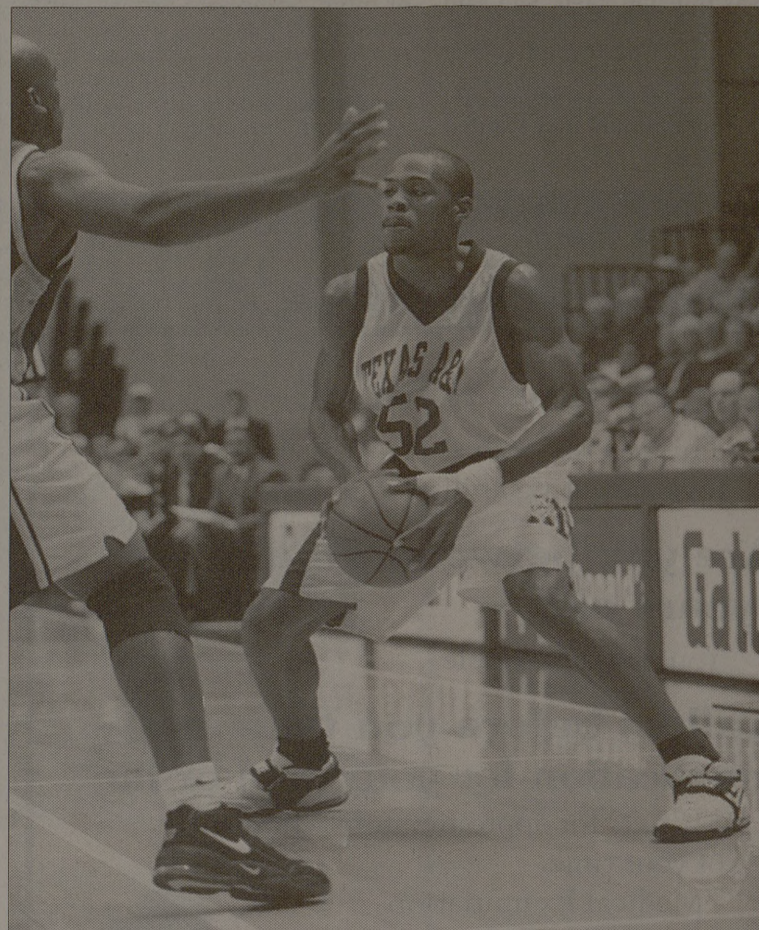
Brown has only one individual goal, although it is a big one.

"I've set standards," Brown said. "I want to win Freshman of the Year, but I'm not looking towards games to produce for the award. I want to win games for the team. I set goals, but I perform for the team first."

Brown is well on his way to

achieving his goal with his ability to produce not only offensively but also defensively.

"Jerald can shoot the ball, and we knew that when he got here," Barone said. "What I've really been impressed with is his defense. He's worked hard at it and taken that part of his game to a new level."



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Freshman guard Jerald Brown looks for the pass in a game at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

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Although Brown is only a freshman, he already has thoughts of the NBA. He said that

if given the choice, he would like to play for the Houston Rockets.

"I would like to stay close to home," Brown said. "In the Houston system I would be able to stay close to my mom and other friendly faces. Its nice to look up in the stands and see her nodding at me."

